



## **A MESSAGE FROM THE ARMY LEADERSHIP**


In recent weeks, you may have read some of the public discussion about the Army's policy on women in combat. It is important that you know where we stand as the Army's most senior leaders. We reviewed the existing policy and how it applies to current operations and to some of our key transformation initiatives. The policy does not need to change. Women Soldiers will continue to serve with honor and courage in the same Military Occupational Specialties and units as they do now.


Department of Defense policy prevents the assignment of women to units, below the brigade level, whose primary mission is direct ground combat. Army policy further prohibits the assignment of women to positions or units that routinely collocate with those units conducting an assigned direct ground combat mission – such as Cannon Field Artillery or Combat Engineer companies. However, all Soldiers, regardless of gender, are equipped, trained and prepared to defend themselves.

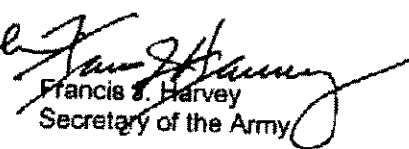
Much of the public discussion on women in combat has been characterized by portrayals of how women have served in the Army in the past, the dangers women face in combat zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and their assignment to the new Brigade Combat Team Units of Action. Recent operations in the War on Terrorism consistently show that any Soldier, whether performing combat or support missions, may be exposed to combat hazards. Moreover, within the new Brigade Combat Team Units of Action women are assigned to subordinate companies, such as the Forward Support Companies of the Brigade Support Battalion, and serve in dangerous combat support missions. This is consistent with both DOD and Army policy and is unchanged from past practice.

Women are making tremendous contributions to our efforts to fight and win the War on Terrorism. They make up about 15% of the active Army, 23% of the Army Reserve and 13% of the Army National Guard. Today, almost 17,000 women Soldiers are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Twenty-seven women have made the ultimate sacrifice there. Women have been killed in action, have suffered wounds from hostile action, and have been held captive by our enemies. Though they are not assigned to units that engage enemy forces in direct ground combat – the best examples are Infantry and Armor battalions and companies – women are exposed to combat danger as they perform aviation missions, ground convoy security, unit resupply operations, and a host of other critical functions. And these women, like their male counterparts and the Army's civilians, are serving honorably, selflessly, and courageously.

Women are an invaluable and essential part of the Army team. They play a crucial role in the War on Terrorism and their sacrifices in this noble effort underscore their dedication and willingness to share great responsibilities – hallmarks of the American Soldier. Our Nation has never been served better and we thank you for your service, sacrifice, and dedication to duty.

  
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Sergeant Major of the Army

  
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